

H. P. Dyer House  
16055 Sanborn Road  
Saratoga Vicinity  
Santa Clara County  
California

HABS No. CA-2050

HABS,  
CAL,  
43-SARA,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Architectural and Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

H. P. DYER HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2050

Location: Sanborn - Skyline County Park, 16055 Sanborn Road,  
Saratoga, Santa Clara County, California

USGS Castle Rock Ridge Quadrangle, Universal Trans-  
verse Mercator Coordinates: 10.583000.4121050

Present Owner: County of Santa Clara

Present Occupant: County Park Rangers

Present Use: Park office information center

Significance: Designed as a sophisticated forest residence in 1915,  
this sandstone and squared redwood timber structure  
has a veranda with outside fireplace, and a rectangular  
corner pavilion. The rigidly geometrical lines of the  
house, with its squared timbers projecting one-and-a-  
half feet at the corners, are echoed by the lines of the  
adjacent rough-dressed ashlar terrace walls and stone  
garden fixtures, forming an integrated whole with the  
similarly designed outbuildings of the estate. The liv-  
ing hall is a dramatic two-story space with a gallery  
along the east wall and is open to the redwood rafters  
of the roof. The living and dining rooms are paneled  
with redwood in the California Arts and Crafts tradition.  
Striking a compromise between suburban and rustic finishes,  
the house is one of the few remaining examples of the so-  
phisticated ranch life of the early twentieth century in  
Santa Clara County.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1915 (Spencer interview)
2. Architect: Unknown. Although a professional architect was used, the design owes much to H. P. Dyer himself. (Spencer interview)
3. Original and subsequent owners: The property lies in the east half of Section 15, Township 8, South Range 2W, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, and is southwest of the center line of Sanborn Road and south of that certain right-of-way 40'-W as described by Deed of Easement from George P. Peterson et ux. to V. J. Pick, dated May 5, 1957, recorded May 9, 1957, in Book 3770 of Official Records at page 177: and also the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 15 and the northwest quarter of Section 22, all in Township 8, S. Range 2W, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian.

- ca. 1911 Recorded: 1914  
Baille family to H. P. Dyer (Seidel interview;  
Garrod, p. 138)
- 1942 Date: 1942  
H. P. Dyer to George Peterson (Seidel interview)
- 1974 Date: March 19, 1974 Recorded: March 21, 1974  
Marcia Jane McManus (Estate of George Peterson)  
to County of Santa Clara (Bell interview)

4. Original plans (house): Dyer installed a waterwheel-powered generator in the main house basement to supply electricity to the house and two outbuildings, a southeast storage room and the "Casino," Dyer's office at the northeast. (Bell interview; Spencer interview)
5. Original plans (landscape): The Dyers replaced the vineyards on the ranch, begun by the Bailles, with prune orchards, the income from which was used for property upkeep. (Spencer interview; Garrod, p. 135)

Remnants of what was apparently extensive original landscaping exist on the east. Terraces are delineated by two-foot-high rough-finished ashlar walls. A heart-shaped cement-bottomed pond lies further east of the main house. Stairs leading from the east entry of the house down to the garden have a geometric sculptured stone element at their head that echoes the lines of the house. There were formal gardens leading to a swimming pool on the south. Two shallow stream-fed pools warmed the water for the swimming pool. (Spencer interview)

6. Alterations: Peterson, the second owner, presumably did some rewiring when commercial electricity became available in 1942. (Bell interview) The most visually disturbing alteration was made by Peterson's son-in-law, McManus, presumably in the late 1950s or early 1960s. (Bell interview) In recent years the living room chandelier and west bookcase, and the bathroom sinks have been removed. Plastic tile had replaced shoulder-height plaster in all bathrooms in the mid-1970s. (Bell interview)

B. Historical Context:

Harold Parker Dyer was an engineer who returned from Ohio to his native California to retire. (Bell interview; Spencer interview) Mrs. Dyer was president of the Saratoga Foothill Club, whose clubhouse (HABS No. CA-2014) was designed by Julia Morgan in 1915-1916. (Cunningham, p. 305) H. P. Dyer donated funds around 1919 for a park commemorating World War I dead that still exists in truncated form in downtown Saratoga. (Cunningham, p. 300) Mrs. Dyer helped to fund the town's public library in the 1920s. (Spencer interview; Cunningham, p. 305) George Peterson stated that the polygonal dining room of the Dyer House was partly inspired by the hexagonal dining room of nearby Welch-Hurst (HABS No. CA-2006). (Carrere interview)

PART II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: None known
- B. Early Views: Old photographs are said to be in possession of Mr. & Mrs. Eldridge T. Spencer, 1215 Lombard St., San Francisco, CA.
- C. Interviews: Interview with Head Park Ranger "Red" Bell at Park Headquarters, Sanborn Rd., Saratoga on August 5, 1977, concerning oral histories given him by members of the Baille family, owners of the tract prior to purchase by the Dyers, neighbors, and by George Peterson, subsequent owner (deceased). Information included dates of construction, alterations, and chain of title.

Interview on August 7, 1977, with Mrs. Marjorie Linn Carrere, P. O. Box 18063, San Francisco, CA, neighbor of Peterson, who resided at nearby Welch-Hurst in 1940s and 1950s, concerning conversations between her and Peterson about Welch-Hurst as inspiration for the Dyer House dining room.

Interview with Mrs. Eldridge T. Spencer, daughter of H. P. Dyer, on August 16, 1977, at 1215 Lombard St., San Francisco, CA, concerning original plans, construction, landscaping, etc.

Interview on August 17, 1977, with Mrs. Leontine Baille Seidel of 1187 Norval Way, San Jose, CA, and Miss Louise Baille of 1196 Brace Ave., San Jose, CA, childhood residents of the area, concerning data of construction, etc., of Sanborn Skyline County Park.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books, Santa Clara Recorder's Office, 70 West Hedding St., San Jose, CA

2. Secondary and published sources:

Cunningham, Florence. Saratoga's First Hundred Years. San Jose, CA: Harlan-Young Press, 1967.

Garrod, R. V. The Saratoga Story. Saratoga, CA: Saratoga Historical Museum, 1962.

Prepared by: Carolyn Hamm  
Project Historian  
August 1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara. The 1977 summer project, the first year of a four-year recording project in Santa Clara County, was completed under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect; and Robert Brüegmann, Project Supervisor (University of Pennsylvania); with Jack Schafer, Architectural Foreman (University of Cincinnati); Carolyn Hamm, Historian (Duke University); and student architects Tim Allenbrook (Rhode Island School of Design), Barbara Hendricks (University of Texas), and Jeff Lees (University of Oklahoma), at the HABS field office in Saratoga, California. The historical data were edited in the HABS Washington, DC office in 1981 by HABS Architectural Historian Denys Peter Myers. Photographs were taken by Jane Lidz in the summer of 1980.